



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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IDNR to post Operation Disrupt signs at state parks to connect people in crisis to important resources

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) has joined the Operation Disrupt initiative aimed at preventing suicide by posting mental health crisis support information at Illinois state parks.

Signs displaying the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline phone number and website, both of which are available 24 hours a day, will be posted in at least 17 IDNR sites in remote locations around Illinois, including Starved Rock, Giant City and Pere Marquette.

“Illinois state parks and trails are a beautiful, peaceful respite for hundreds of thousands of visitors every year,” said IDNR Director Colleen Callahan. “As IDNR continues to remind people that spending time in nature has positive mental health benefits, it’s also vital that we make sure people who may find themselves in a mental or emotional crisis at a state park know about resources that are available to help them.”

Sept. 4-10 is National Suicide Prevention Week.

Operation Disrupt is an initiative announced earlier this year to address the growing epidemic of teen and young adult suicides. It was developed by a joint task force including Linden Oaks Behavioral Health, Naperville Park District, City of Naperville, and Forest Preserve Districts of DuPage and Will Counties.

“I am so pleased that IDNR and the Conservation Police are joining the Operation Disrupt initiative. They are outstanding partners in the fight against teen and young adult suicide,” said Officer Thomas Wronski of the Naperville Park District Police and one of the founders of Operation Disrupt. “Operation Disrupt is growing in visibility and influence because it is a practical, easy-to-implement program that can be adapted to the different needs of organizations and their unique locations.”

The first 17 IDNR sites to post Operation Disrupt signs are: Dixon Springs, Eagle Creek, Fort Massac, Fox Ridge, Giant City, Pere Marquette, Rock Cut, Sangchris Lake, Starved Rock and Wolf

Creek state parks; Eldon Hazlet, Kickapoo, Moraine View, and Shabbona Lake state recreation areas; Trail of Tears State Forest; Golconda Marina; and Shelbyville State Fish and Wildlife Area.

Illinois Conservation Police do not maintain statistics about the number of suicides in Illinois state parks, but they are not uncommon. One suicide is too many, said Illinois Conservation Police Director Jed Whitchurch, noting that most Illinois conservation police officers have received crisis training so they can provide appropriate assistance when needed.

“One sobering aspect of conservation police work is that officers will most likely encounter a suicide in a state park at some point in their career,” Whitchurch said. “We want to do everything we can to ensure people in crisis have access to help, even in the most remote areas of the state. Proper crisis training for officers and the Operation Disrupt signs are two important steps toward that goal.”

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can be reached by dialing 988, which connects the caller to a certified crisis center near where the call is placed. The Lifeline also can be reached at 800-273-8255 (TALK). For more information, visit <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

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